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Interpreting Neologisms Used in Korea's Rapidly Changing Society: Delivering the Meaning of Neologisms in Simultaneous Interpretation*

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RÉSUMÉ

La présente étude passe en revue les différents néologismes créés entre 2003 et 2004, les classe par catégories et analyse l'interprétation qui en est faite pour véhiculer fidèlement le vouloir-dire de l'orateur. Cette présentation porte sur les points suivants :

- 1) raisons de la néologie, incidences de celle-ci sur l'expression dans la langue d'arrivée et approche adoptée en interprétation simultanée;
- 2) examen des stratégies de recherche de correspondances/d'équivalences par catégorie de néologismes.

La dernière partie s'attache à démontrer que l'important essor de la néologie doit se répercuter sur la formation des interprètes afin que ceux-ci, plutôt que de traduire littéralement les propos de l'orateur, soient respectueux de leur sens afin d'en assurer l'intelligibilité et restent ainsi compétitifs sur un marché de l'interprétation en constante évolution, en garantissant une communication claire et efficace.

ABSTRACT

This study will review what kind of neologisms have appeared between the period of 2003-2004, categorize them, and examine how they have been interpreted in order to faithfully convey what the speaker's intent is, that is the vouloir-dire. The presentation will cover the following points:

- 1) reasons for the formation of neologisms; their impact on TL expression and how it is managed in SI
- 2) review correspondence and/or equivalence strategies by neologism category.

The latter part will discuss how the widespread use of neologisms should be reflected in the pedagogy of interpreters in order to ensure that they do not interpret the literal meaning but rather are faithful to the speaker's meaning, in order to ensure intelligibility, thereby remaining competitive in this ever-changing interpretation market through clear and effective communication.

초록

현대 사회와 문화의 변화 양상과 변화 경향을 숙지하는 것이 통역사가 시대의 변화에 능동적으로 대처하여 충실한 통역을 하기 위한 전제 조건임을 바탕으로 본고에서는 2003-2004년 급증하고 있는 신조어의 생성 배경을 유형화하였으며 그 의미 전달 방법을 살펴보았다. 나아가 사회의 새로운 현상을 반영하는 신조어를 습득하고, 통역 현장에서 주어진 시간 내에 정확히 의미 전달을 할 수 있는 능력을 갖춘 통역사를 양성하기 위한 접근 방법을 살펴보고 경쟁력 있는 통역사 양성을 위한 교육 과정에서 익혀야 하는 노하우가 무엇인가도 고찰하였다. 최근 급증하고 있는 일반 신조어들의 경우 회의의 주제와는 무관하게 자주 사용될 수 있는 표현들이므로 연사가 신조어를 통해 말하고자 하는 바, 즉 의미를 충실히 전달하는 방법 교육이 더 중요하게 되었다. 시간 제약을 많이 받는 동시 통역의 경우 문화적 차이가 큰 언

어권에서 사용되는 신조어들을 청자가 듣는 순간 이해할 수 있도록 이해용이성을 고려한 대응/등가 관련 통역전략도 살펴보았다.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

neologism, pedagogy of interpreters, speaker's meaning, intelligibility, effective communication

I. Introduction

From ancient times, change in human society has been brought about through new experiences and the consequent expansion of our range of awareness. One notable aspect of this change is the development and transformation that human languages have undergone throughout the many years of human history.

An inevitable element of the process of change is generation and extinction in both small and large scale. Generation and extinction in the realm of language is closely related to social phenomena, in that language directly reflects changes in social reality, politics, the economy and culture (Krysin 1992).

We live today in an "Information Age" which prescribes that information be at the center of all societal activities. The amount of newly generated information that we utilize in our daily lives far surpasses the accumulative amount of information that we produced in past generations. And therefore we are faced with the task of creating a huge number of new labels and names for everything new that has come into existence in recent years.

An interpreter who wishes to render a faithful interpretation needs to proactively prepare for societal change by constantly taking note of the trends of change in today's society and culture. In this context, interpreters must continuously work to acquire neologisms that represent new social phenomena, and thus be able to deliver in the TL the accurate meaning of the ST in the limited time that is available for interpretation. Furthermore, the know-how that is related to interpreting neologisms should be systematically dealt with in interpreter training courses.

This paper looks at neologisms included in the 2003 and 2004 New Vocabularies Reports of the National Institute of Korean Language and discusses the issue of neologisms in interpretation.

II. Neologisms and Interpretation

2.1 Definition of Neologisms

Neologisms can be described simply as words that have been newly created. The Oxford Dictionary defines neologisms as words that have been recently invented or recently borrowed, or as new meanings for existing words. The Oxford Dictionary also explains that neology is the process of forming new lexical groups.

In essence, neologisms are words that are either entirely new or have existed previously, that give new expressions or meanings to objects or concepts. Examples of neologisms in the Korean language include uniquely Korean words that have at times been created – in the context of language purification – to replace foreign loanwords and words based on Chinese characters. New words and phrases that are used commonly in speech but are not included in dictionaries are also regarded as neologisms.

Yet another group of neologisms are newly coined fad words that are widely used in our everyday spoken and written language. These words may express novel thoughts, they may very fittingly express things, or they may have distinctive word forms and pronunciations. Up until the early 1990s, fad words in Korea were really just fads that went away with time. But in the late 1990s, we started to see the large-scale emergence of new fad words that did not fade away but rather gained more and more popular usage. The neologisms dealt with in this paper mostly belong to this group of “established” fad words.

2.2 *Keeping Up with Neologisms*

Language reflects society. This reflection is particularly clear in newly created words. Neologisms can therefore be regarded as mirrors of social phenomena. It is quite natural that most of the neologisms contained in the 2004 New Vocabularies Report are linked to social issues, with a large number having to do with leisure, the economy and the Internet.

Rapid change in our society will lead to even more new words. The trend seems to be that neologisms will continue to take up larger portions of our language. Oxford continues to add new words to its dictionaries, and, in a similar fashion the National Institute of Korean Language publishes an annual list of Korean neologisms. While we might use hundreds of new words in our daily lives, we easily overlook the significance of these neologisms.

As interpreters, in order to faithfully and fully convey the message of the speaker, we particularly need to keep up with neologisms generated and used by specific generations or social groups.

III. Korean Neologisms 2003/2004

In a nutshell, neologisms are words that have been newly created. Most recently, Korean neologisms have been concentrated in the language of the younger population and the language of computer forum users, but the whole spectrum of neologisms range from group specific language, e. g. the language of college students, union workers; language created to describe new concepts, e. g. computer terminology, academic terms; to language invented through broadcast media, e. g. fad words. These neologisms share just one point in common: they are new words that did not exist previously.

In reviewing the New Vocabularies Reports of 2003 and 2004, this paper will group the neologisms into several categories, and also look at imported neologisms (new foreign loan words and foreign neologisms) in comparison with neologisms originating in Korea.

The 2003 and 2004 New Vocabularies Report of the National Institute of Korean Language categorizes Korean neologisms as follows.

<Korean Neologisms in 2003 and 2004>

	General Terms	Technical Terms	Total
2003	448(68.3%)	208(31.7%)	656
2004	429(68.5%)	197(31.5%)	626

<Technical Neologisms in 2003 and 2004>

	Society	Sports/ Leisure	Economy	Medicine	Computer/ Telecommu- nications	Others	Total
2003	48	47	31	18	12	52	208
2004	44	42	20	18	13	60	197

Of a total of 656 neologisms in 2003, 448 (68.3%) were general words and 208 (31.7%) were technical. In 2004, there were 626 neologisms in total, among which 429 (68.5%) were general and 197 (31.5%) were technical. The technical terms mostly had to do with social issues, sports and leisure, the economy, medicine, and computers and telecommunications, clearly showing a shift in public interest from politics and legal issues to social, cultural, economic and health issues.

3.1 General Terms

Neologisms such as sa-o-jeong (사오정), o-ryuk-do (오륙도), yuk-i-o (육이오), i-tae-baek (이태백), gwi-cha-nism (귀차니즘) were created in 2003, while nak-ba-seang (낙바생), cheong-baek-jeon (청백전), sam-il-jeol (삼일절), sa-i-jil (사이질) emerged in 2004. All of the above are new words that reflect social phenomena.

The following is a more detailed review of the general neologisms of 2003 and 2004.

Since these neologisms reflect current issues in Korean society, these neologisms are not only interesting from a sociological perspective to observe the transformation that Korea is undergoing but also important in order to understand and convey the message.

3.1.1 Neologisms Reflecting the Economic Downturn and Consequent Corporate Downsizing

These neologisms use existing words but place a twist on them to create a new meaning. So if an interpreter doesn't grasp the speaker's meaning, that is the new meaning, he risks conveying the wrong message or the original meaning. The common characteristic of these neologisms is that they reflect the economic downturn and the consequent corporate downsizing by using expressions containing numbers to indicate target ages. This is possible since the Korean language is syllabic and therefore each syllable represents a word, much like an acronym in English.

sa-o-jeong (사오정)

Original meaning: Name of a character in Chinese writer Wu Cheng'en's *Monkey King Sun Wukong*

New meaning: 1. A person who is hard of hearing and always seems to hear things incorrectly. 2. Early retirement at 45 years of age

Composition: sa: 4, o: 5, jeong: first syllable of jeong-nyeon-toe-jik (retirement)

o-ryuk-do (오륙도)

Original meaning: Name of an island off the coast of Busan, a port city in the southeast part of Korea so called because depending on the weather either 5 or 6 islands are visible.

New meaning: You are stealing the future of the younger generation if you are still working at the age of 56

Composition: o: 5, ryuk: 6, do: first syllable of do-duk (thief)

yuk-i-o (육이오)

Original meaning: The Korean War (June 25, the day when the Korean War erupted)

New meaning: You are one of the five (5) main enemies of the country if you are still working at the age of 62

Composition: yuk: 6, i: 2, o: 5

sam-pal-seon (삼팔선)

Original meaning: The 38th Parallel

New meaning: Age 38 is the Maginot Line for keeping your job (you should start looking for another job soon)

Composition: sam: 3, pal: 8, seon: line

3.1.2 Neologisms Reflecting Youth Unemployment

Another repercussion of the economic difficulties that Korea experienced early in this decade was that many college graduates fresh out of university had difficulty finding jobs. This phenomenon also sparked off a slew of neologisms.

i-tae-baek (이태백)

Original meaning: The Korean pronunciation for 李太白 (Li Taibai), a famous writer from the Tang Dynasty of China

New meaning: Over half of the population in their twenties is unemployed

Composition: i: 2, tae: first syllable of tae-ban (half), baek: first syllable of baek-su (unemployed person)

nak-ba-seang (낙바생): new word

Meaning: A university student looking for a job, being likened to a camel trying to get through the eye of a needle

Composition: nak: first syllable of nak-ta (camel), ba: first syllable of ba-neul (needle), seang: last syllable of hak-saeng (student)

cheong-baek-jeon (청백전)

Original meaning: Game where two sides play against each other

New meaning: The age of youth unemployment

Composition: cheong: first syllable of cheong-nyeon(youth), baek: first syllable of baek-su (unemployed person), jeon: first syllable of jeon-seong-si-dae (the age of ~)

sam-il-jeol (삼일절)

Original meaning: March 1st, 1919, a day of nationwide rallies for liberation from Japanese colonial rule

New meaning: No hope for employment after age 31

Composition: sam: 3, il: 1, jeol: first syllable of jeol-mang (despair)

3.1.3 Neologisms Reflecting the Not-so-serious Nature of Youths

gwi-cha-nism (귀차니즘): new word

Meaning: A word portraying the younger generation who are perfectly at ease spending time alone and who do not like to be bothered with anything that is in the least bit a nuisance

gwi-chan-ta (feeling like everything is a bother) + ism

3.1.4 Neologisms Related to the Internet and the Digital Age

sa-reu-ba-i-teu (사르바이트): new word

Meaning: Earning spending money in the cyber world

Composition: sa: first syllable of sa-i-beo(cyber), reu-ba-i-teu: arbeit(part-time work) without the first syllable

ak-peul-leo (악플러): new word

Meaning: A person who posts nasty replies in online forums

ak: pronunciation of 惡 (Chinese character meaning 'bad'), peul: middle syllable of ri-peul-la-i (reply), leo: Korean pronunciation of the suffix 'er'

sa-i-jil (사이질): new word

Meaning: To access 'Cyworld,' an internet homepage template service provider's website or to create and manage a mini homepage in Cyworld

Composition: sa-i: first two syllables of sa-i-wol-deu (Cyworld), jil: Korean suffix meaning 'to do something' (negative connotation)

pon-ka-jok (폰카족): new word

Meaning: A person who frequently uses cameras embedded in mobile phone handsets

Composition: pon: Korean pronunciation of 'phone,' ka: first syllable of ka-me-ra (camera), jok: tribe, group

General neologisms appear in all kinds of conferences, regardless of the subject matter. Therefore, interpreter trainees should be aware of such neologisms and take note of how the words were generated in the first place. Later on, when discussing interpretation strategies, we shall deal with whether or not the interpreter needs to explain how the neologisms were formed or whether the interpreter simply needs to convey the meaning of the word.

3.2 *Technical Terms*

3.2.1 *Society*

Some of the neologisms that were included in the list related to social phenomena in 2003 are as follows:

gi-reo-gi-a-ppa (goose father: a father who sends his wife and children abroad for the sake of the children's education), cf. gi-reo-gi-eom-ma (goose mother)

ro-tto-gong-hwa-guk (lotto republic)

me-ttu-gi-ga-jok (grasshopper family: a family who moves around often searching for better schools)

mut-ji-ma-jae-su (don't-ask-why college entrance exam repeater)

sam-yuk-gu-jeung-hu-gun (3•6•9 syndrome)

il-ha-gi-sil-eo-byeong (don't-want-to-work disease)

teu-ren-deu-wo-cheo (trend watcher)

pe-teu-sin-deu-rom (pet syndrome)

In 2004, the following made the list of neologisms:

di-jen-deo-ri-jeum (degenderism)

di-ji-teol-chi-mae (digital dementia)

il-pal-sam-gong-se-dae (18-30 generation)

a-chim-hyeong-in-gan (morning-type person), cf. ya-gan-hyeong-in-gan (evening-type person)

te-reo-jeung-hu-gun (terror syndrome),

ho-mo-di-ka-ku-seu (homo-dica-cus), ho-mo-haen-pon-ku-seu (homo-handphone-cus)

At this point, it might prove useful to look at a few social neologisms and discuss how to effectively convey the meaning of these new words to audiences of different cultures.

gi-reo-gi-eom-ma (goose mother)

A woman who takes care of her children who are studying abroad and therefore lives apart from her husband. A variation on gi-reo-gi-a-ppa (goose father)

sam-yuk-gu-jeung-hu-gun (3•6•9 syndrome)

A syndrome which causes employees to experience an impulse to quit, join another company or start a new company every three months. This was derived from a popular game which first appeared on television in which a group of people counted and every third number (3-6-9) had to be clapped.

ho-mo-di-ka-ku-seu (homo-dica-cus: homo + di(gital) + ca(mera) + cus)

'A human being who uses a digital camera,' meaning, a person who is very adept at using a digital camera

sa-o-yuk-sa-se-dae(45-64 generation)

The middle aged generation that is in between people in the 386 generation (people in their thirties who went to college in the 1980s and were born in the 1960s) and the "silver generation"

il-pal-sam-gong-se-dae(18-30 generation)

The younger generation between the ages of 18 and 30

3.2.2 *Sports and Leisure*

In the area of sports and leisure, 2003 saw such new words as:

ma-un-tin-bo-deu (mountain board)

bo-di-bo-ding (body boarding)

se-re-na-seul-laem (Serena Slam)

syut-on-gol (shoot on goal)

seu-ka-i-seo-ping (sky surfing)

tae-bo (Taebo)

peon-yak-king (Funyaking)

hel-gi-seu-ki (heliskiing)

hel-li-bo-deu (heliboarding)

New words in 2004 included:

geu-ra-un-deu-gol-peu (ground golf)

di-seu-keu-do-geu (disc dog)

reo-neo-eop-seul-laem (runner-up slam)

bael-leon-seu-bo-deu (balance board)

bo-deu-reo-neo (boardrunner)

a-ku-a-wo-king (aqua walking)

po-in-teu-po-wi-deu (point forward)

peul-la-i-pi-si (fly fish – upgraded version of a banana boat)

hel-seu-ro-bik (healthrobic: health+aerobic).

As can be seen from the above list, many of the neologisms of 2003 and 2004 have to do with the introduction of new sports and leisure activities. This is a reflection of the fact that with the gradual implementation of the five-day work week from 2003, many more people have been able to engage in sports and cultural activities on the longer weekends.

For interpreters, this means that they have to keep their ears open for such newly coined expressions and think about an equivalent TL expression to be used when the occasion should arise.

The following are some explanations of neologisms in sports and leisure:

di-seu-keu-do-geu (disc dog)

Dogs that chase after and catch frisbees before they touch the ground

tae-bo (Taebo)

A combination of taekwondo and boxing

3.2.3 *The Economy*

Economic neologisms in 2003 include:

geum-te-keu (making money by investing in gold)

teu-ri-peul-dip (triple dip)/meol-ti-dip (multi dip)

seu-ma-teu-so-bi (smart consumption)

il-peo-sen-teu-ma-ke-ting (1% marketing)

im-geum-pi-keu-je (wage peak system)

che-ri-pi-keo (cherry picker)

keo-ri-eo-ko-chi (career coach)

peo-neol-li-seu-te (fund manager plus analyst)

peon-dyu-rang-seu (fund plus insurance).

In 2004, words such as:

gi-eop-do-si (corporate city)

no-peul-le-i-syeon (noflation)

mun-hwa-jeop-dae (treating clients to cultural entertainment)

bi-a-i-bi (BIB: branch in branch)

seu-ta-ji-su (star index)

jeop-dae-sil-myeong-je (real name system for entertainment of clients)

hyeon-geum-yeong-su-jeung-je-do (cash receipt system)

ho-gaek-mae-jang (a shop that attracts customers to a shopping complex) were noted as neologisms related to economic activities.

Such economic neologisms have become established in Korean vocabulary as more people recognize the importance of economic awareness not only in the business sector but for the public in general.

The following are some examples of economic neologisms and their renditions in the course of interpretation.

geum-te-keu

A new term that was created as gold emerged as a new way of investment when gold banking – buying and selling gold in banks – became available in Korean banks last year

mun-hwa-jeop-dae

Companies giving clients or customers tickets to sports games, cultural performances, etc.

jeop-dae-sil-myeong-je

A system which requires companies to disclose the name of the client for which the company spends more than 500 thousand won (approximately 450 dollars) in entertainment costs on a single occasion

ho-gaek-mae-jang

A shop within a shopping complex that attracts a large number of customers to the shopping mall

3.2.4 *Medicine*

Many neologisms were also acknowledged in the field of medicine. For 2003, there were:

li-ma-jeung-hu-gun (Lima Syndrome)

seu-tok-hol-leum-jeung-hu-gun (Stockholm Syndrome)

sa-seu (SARS)

syu-peo-jeon-ja-pa (super electromagnetic wave)

beu-i-di-ti-jeung-hu-kun (Visual Display Terminal Syndrome),

while in 2004 we had:

geo-buk-mok-jeung-hu-gun (Turtle Neck Syndrome)

saeng-hwal-chi-ryo (daily life therapy)

eol-len-jeung-hu-gun (Irlen Syndrome)

ka-reu-bok-si-se-reo-pi (carboxy therapy)

ke-eo-mae-ni-jeo (care manager)

tae-ban-ju-sa (placenta injection)

ti-em-a-i (TMI: Text Message Injury), and

pi-si-bang-jeung-hu-gun (Internet Café Syndrome), among others.

Medical neologisms reflect recent trends such as the the terror of SARS that spread around the world in the first half of 2003, as well as the recent trend of ‘well-being’ where everybody seems to be so health conscious.

Here are some explanations of medical neologisms of 2003 and 2004.

saeng-hwal-chi-ryo

Therapy that looks into the eating habits and other lifestyle factors of a patient to identify the cause of the disease and to provide appropriate treatment

pi-si-bang-jeung-hu-gun

A phenomenon where someone suddenly dies while engaging in computer games at an Internet Café

sa-i-beo-kon-deu-ri-a (cyberchondria)

The tendency for some people to incorrectly self-diagnose themselves after looking up their symptoms in online medical resources

3.2.5 *Computers, Telecommunications and the Internet*

2003 saw the creation of words such as beul-lo-geu (blog), be-i-peo-we-eo (vaporware) and yu-bi-kwi-teo-seu-keom-pyu-ting (ubiquitous computing), while in 2004, di-em-bi (DMB: Digital Multimedia Broadcasting), o-geu-bo-bi-seu (Ogg Vorbis)/o-geu (Ogg), wa-i-beu-ro (WiBro), wi-ki-sa-jeon (Wiki Dictionary), wi-ki-wi-ki (WikiWiki) and kol (call) were newly coined.

This field gave rise to many neologisms related to the Internet and mobile communications, which began to be widely used in the mid-1990s.

An example of an interpreter’s management of a related neologism is as follows:

mel-jin (mail + magazine)

A service through which magazines are delivered via email

3.3 *Imported Neologisms*

A review of the origins of neologisms of 2003 and 2004 shows that 56.1% and 55.1% of Korean neologisms originated from foreign languages in 2003 and 2004, respectively. With globalization and internationalization, more exchanges are being carried out with persons from different countries, and more technologies are also being introduced, leading to the advent of more imported neologisms.

The following are some examples of imported neologisms:

Geul-lo-meo-re-i-syeon (glomeration: global + conglomeration)
 geul-lo-bi-si-ti (globesity: global + obesity)
 na-i-tol-lo-ji (night + ology)
 baen-do-top (bandeau top)
 be-i-keu-teu-a-ut (baked out)
 bi-ni (beanie)
 seon-da-u-neo (sundowner)
 si-ri-eol-kil-leo (serial killer)
 eon-deo-do-geu (underdog)
 ja-i-gaen-ti-jeum (gigantism)
 peu-ti-seu-ka-peu (petit scarf).

All of the aforementioned neologisms are either of Korean origin or foreign origin. At this point, it would be worthwhile to examine and compare interpretation strategies for domestic neologisms and imported neologisms.

IV. Interpretation Strategies for Neologisms of Korean Origin and Imported Neologisms

4.1 *Neologisms of Korean Origin*

If the interpreter were to interpret gi-reo-gi-a-ppa as 'goose father' without any additional explanation, the full meaning of the term (i.e. a father who sends his wife and children abroad for the sake of the children's education) would not be conveyed to the TL audience. The audience would probably not understand at all why the interpreter was talking about a goose in the first place. Of course, if the TL audience consists mainly of expatriates who have lived in Korea for a long period of time, simply mentioning 'goose father' will probably do the job. But if the audience is not familiar with Korean social issues, the interpreter will have to explain that 'a man who is a faithful goose father' is 'a man who is living apart from his family in order to support the overseas studies of his children.' Once explained, the interpreter could then feel free to say 'goose father,' without any further elaboration.

4.2 *Imported Neologisms*

Imported neologisms need to be approached from a couple of different directions. In some cases, foreign loan words are directly brought into the Korean language, and in others, a corresponding Korean neologism is available.

Countries that develop new technologies will also create neologisms in their own language for these new technologies. These countries are the generators of neologisms. Meanwhile, countries that import these new technologies also import the neologisms

that go along with these newly imported technologies. These countries are the importers of neologisms. For 'generators,' new words come into being after a new technology has matured somewhat. But for 'importers,' neologisms are needed from the very first step of trying to understand a new technology that is being introduced. In short, the following relation exists.

Generators (exporters) of new technologies and new concepts: concepts precede words
Importers of new technologies and new concepts: words precede concepts

By definition, 'developing countries' are importers of technologies that have already been developed by others. In two aspects, this characteristic makes neology a slightly more formidable task for developing countries. First, most technologies from other countries have been developed under totally different technological and cultural environments. And second, if the developing countries hope to catch up with advanced countries, they need to create more neologisms at a much faster pace.

Korea is classified as a 'newly industrializing country,' but it is still in the developing stage in many sectors. In order to bring in more advanced technologies, contacts with foreign experts are therefore quite frequent. An interpreter working in such situations would, in many instances, have to convey a message from a foreign language into Korean even though exact Korean corresponding terms may not exist for some technical terminology. A two-step interpretation strategy could be employed in such circumstances. When the new word first appears in the SL, the interpreter could either borrow the SL term in its original form and bring it into the TL as a loanword, or create an equivalent neologism in the TL. The interpreter should then quickly add on a brief explanation of the meaning of the new term. The next time the word appears in the SL, the interpreter could simply use the loanword or the newly created neologism without any further explanation. As interpretation must take place in a very limited amount of time, the interpreter will not be able to repeat time after time the meaning of the new term.

The following is an example.

jeon-ja-hwa-pye 전자화폐 (electronic money): cyber money

Cyber money is money that is used in online transactions. Though it is not tangible, it is as effective as real money in that it is an instrument for financial transactions and shopping in cyberspace. Jeon-ja-hwa-pye is the Korean correspondent for 'cyber money.' But before consensus was reached on the term jeon-ja-hwa-pye, interpreters would say sa-i-beo-meo-ni (cyber money) and then add on a brief explanation in Korean. Now, as jeon-ja-hwa-pye is a widely recognized term, interpreters no longer have to add any explanations, can simply say jeon-ja-hwa-pye, and still be fully understood.

It should be noted that interpreters are not scholars of language, and therefore do not play the role of protecting the purity of the Korean language or coining socially recognized neologisms. Interpreters need only make sure that the participants of the speech event for which they are interpreting understand what is being said. The interpreter is there to communicate at the eye-level of the speaker and the audience.

Interpreting strategies for neologisms may differ according to the mode of interpretation. In consecutive interpretation, important neologisms can be interpreted by

first providing a literal translation of the term, explaining about the origins of the term and then accurately conveying the meaning of the term in the current context. In simultaneous interpretation, however, there is not enough time for lengthy explanations, and the interpreter must therefore convey the contextual meaning of the neologism in as compact a manner as possible. Of course, if the speaker elaborates further on a specific neologism, then it may be necessary for the interpreter to quickly explain about the origins of the new term.

One thing that is always true for interpretation is that the 'message' must be fully conveyed in the limited time available. So, definitely, it would be impossible for an interpreter to state the meaning of a new word every time it comes up in the SL.

4.3 Neologisms and Interpreter Training

Some languages boast a very wide range of vocabulary that may seem to cover all aspects of human society. But as human activity – particularly in the field of science and technology – continues to broaden its horizons, all languages will continue to grow and develop in order to express new situations and new concepts. With more rapid social change, neologisms will spring up at faster rates, leading to more new words every single day.

Thus,

1. new words and phrases will be created
2. new loanwords will be brought in from foreign languages
3. new meanings will be given to existing words.

This trend will very likely continue into the future.

The 'A' language is the interpreter's native tongue in which appropriate expressions can be formulated in the shortest amount of time. For this very reason, interpreters usually work into their 'A' languages in simultaneous interpretation. When an interpreter leaves their native country for a long period of time, the interpreter could lose some proficiency in their native language. New words could come into use, and existing words could take on new meanings to reflect the changes in society, leaving the interpreter with the ongoing task of making continuous efforts for top-level language proficiency.

The following are some guidelines for interpreter training with regard to neologisms.

1. Read newspapers in all of your working languages every day and keep note of new words or phrases.
2. Perform regular reviews of neologisms that have been previously noted.
3. When given an interpretation assignment, look for topic-relevant neologisms in all working languages. For those neologisms originating in the Korean language, grasp the core meaning of the neologism to be able to convey the meaning concisely in the other language. For foreign language neologisms, check if there are any corresponding Korean neologisms. If so, keep these Korean language correspondents ready for immediate use during interpretation. If not, be ready to bring the foreign language neologisms directly into the Korean interpretation, and also prepare a very brief explanation to add on to the borrowed expression.

V. Conclusion

Language is organic in that it continuously changes in tune with changes in the times, social reality, and the political, cultural, economic environment. In Korea, many neologisms are being used in various fields. Interpreters must be sensitive to neologisms, and therefore must continuously work on understanding new words and on expressing new concepts in easy-to-understand ways.

As Jean Delisle once noted, through frequent use, some neologisms may become firmly rooted in language use and, further, come to be recognized as general terminology. But many words created according to the temporary needs of writers, journalists, interpreters and translators do not become recognized as general terminology. The words coined by interpreters may even differ from those created by translators in that interpreters, unlike translators, must immediately come up with an easily understandable expression that suits the interpretation situation.

It is the foremost task of the interpreter to render an accurate and faithful interpretation by proactively preparing for changes in society. To this end, interpreters must carefully take note of trends in social and cultural change, especially in language which reflects such trends. It would be extremely helpful for conference interpreters to compile systematic lists of frequently used neologisms, particularly those neologisms that appear often at international conferences.

Through this review on the interpretation of neologism, it can also be noted that interpretation quality depends not only on language proficiency, background knowledge and interpretation know-how, but also heavily on how the interpreter prepares for a specific assignment.

NOTES

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